

Letter from Commander, Coast Guard Squadron One to  
Commander, Western Area regarding the action of the  
POINT WHITE in the sinking of a Viet Cong junk with  
16 Viet Cong on board in Soi Rap River in March 1966.

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010-66  
14 March 1966

1. The following detailed narrative of Point White's successful operation against a VC junk on 10 March 1966 is submitted in order to keep you as fully informed as possible on important activities and developments relating to Ronone.
2. On Tuesday morning 8 March, CTF 115 issued an order to deploy two WPBs in the Soi Rap River. This river marks the western boundary of the Rung Sat Special Zone south of Saigon and separates this mangrove covered swamp from the rich Delta area. The RSSZ is known to be infested with VC who have ammo factories and training camps in continuous operation there. So far all attempts to dislodge their hold on the area have come to nought. Across the Soi Rap River the land is under cultivation, primarily rice. All food and water for VC in the RSSZ is brought in by junk from this area. Like the RSSZ the Delta is VC controlled. Therefore, by being in the Soi Rap our boats have hostile shore on both sides. Their mission is to intercept VC traffic crossing the Soi Rap between the RSSZ and the Delta.
3. By the afternoon of the 8th two WPBs from Division 13 were patrolling the lower 12 miles of the Soi Rap. On both the 8th and 9th the boats patrolled this area only in daylight hours, returning to their base before dark. However, on the 10th the patrol was established on a continuous day and night basis. Points Hudson and White had the first "watch." Because it was a new and more restricted area of operations I went along in Point White which patrolled the upper part of the area north of Ly Nhon.
4. Attached to each cutter were two Vietnamese junks from Coastal Group 33. Their officer-in-charge rode Point White. Daylight hours on the 10th were spent familiarizing the watch officers with the waters and taking soundings to augment the sparse and rather old information on the available charts. A few junks were boarded. Nothing suspicious.

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5. The area patrolled by Point White is a known river crossing point for VC traffic. The Song Van Sat leading to the RSSZ from the eastern side of the Soi Rap is a major water highway in the area. In as much as it could be assumed the VC were aware of the Point White in that section of the Soi Rap. It was decided to pull a ruse to mislead them. Accordingly, at dusk Point White steamed south to the mouth of the Soi Rap at standard speed to give the impression that she was leaving for the night. Just as the boats had done on the previous two days. When darkness overtook the cutter she came about and slowly made her way north again to the Song Van Sat.

6. At about 2100 several rifle shots were fired from the beach adjacent to the mouth of the Song Van Sat. Point White was approximately 700 yards offshore at the time so no trouble was caused. The firing was ignored so as not to reveal our position, identity or firepower.

7. At 2215 the Point White was about two miles south of the Song Van Sat when a radar target appeared at the mouth of the river traveling westward across the Soi Rap. Point White went to General Quarters and closed the target at full speed, sounding her siren. At about 200 yards the target was made out as a small junk. The Vietnamese liaison officer hailed the junk via the loudhailer and ordered it to stop. Repeated orders were ignored. At about 150 yards Point White illuminated with her search light.

8. Reaction to the searchlight was instantaneous. The junk poured intense fire at Point White. It is estimated that one automatic weapon and eight to ten rifles were being employed. Point White returned fire with .50 caliber and AR 15s. A flash fire occurred in the junk's after cabin. At this point the target was three points on the port bow. As the range closed to less than 100 yards the junk's fire continued. Lt E. J. Hickey Jr, commanding officer of Point White made a rapid wise decision to ram the junk. He made an abrupt turn to port and skidded the starboard bow of the Point White into the junk to strike a sharp but glancing blow. This caused the junk to ship a great deal of water and throw the personnel off balance. The junk's firing ceased. Several of her personnel jumped overboard and two stood in the sternsheets with hands raised.

9. At that point the two CG 33 junks arrived to assist in mopping up. Lt Hickey personally recovered one wounded VC from the water by going down the scramble net. His quick thinking and reaction saved the man who was badly burned and about to go under. This prisoner later turned out to be a key VC leader in the RSSZ.



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10. Point White went alongside the junk which was now sinking and took two prisoners from her sternsheets. One Point White crewmen attempted to assist a wounded man by reaching over the side to drag him on board, but the man suddenly turned and fired at our crewman. A covering crewman shot him.

11. All this while attempts were being made to recover possible intelligence material from the sinking junk. But this was made difficult by one VC who continued to fire sporadically through a narrow opening in the forward cockpit. Finally, a Point White crewman with AR-15 managed to work himself into a position where he could get a clear field of fire into the cockpit. The firing ceased.

12. By this time the junk was just about swamped. Some documents, materials, and rifles (ChiCom) were recovered as the junk sank. Approximately eight bodies went down with her. Point White buoyed the site.

13. The fourth prisoner was recovered from the water after several minutes of persuasive talk by the Vietnamese liaison officer. He kept swimming away from the cutter and the junks, but finally at the point of exhaustion he took the kapok heaving line that was thrown to him and hauled aboard.

14. Two of the VC swimming in the water by the junks were shot by the VNN junk personnel who apparently saw something menacing about their actions. According to the prisoners the junk was proceeding to the Delta with 16 men on board to purchase food and water. However, this story is suspect. It appears more likely from the large number of people on board and the deliberate attempt to show it out that this was an armed escort for the RSSZ VC leader that was captured. Intelligence is still working on this and the VNN is attempted to locate and raise the junk.

15. Point White suffered no casualties or significant damage. One small arms slug made a crease about 3/8" deep in one mast light. Another went through the cardboard containers of three White Phosphorus mortar rounds and lodged in the fin of an illumination round. Lt Hickey cleared the area and personally jettisoned these rounds.

16. Point White did a very credible job on this operation and added even more to the esteem in which the Squadron is held by our sister services and the Republic of Vietnam

R. J. LOFORTE





THE SECRETARY OF THE NAVY  
WASHINGTON

The Secretary of the Navy takes pleasure in presenting the  
NAVY COMMENDATION MEDAL to

LIEUTENANT EUGENE J. HICKEY, JR.  
UNITED STATES COAST GUARD

for service as set forth in the following

CITATION:

For meritorious service while engaged in the planning for establishment, outfitting and shakedown of Coast Guard Squadron One from 27 May to 30 July 1965, and while serving with the United States forces engaged in armed conflict with the Viet Cong in Vietnam from 31 July 1965 until 1 May 1966. Serving as Commanding Officer, USCGC POINT WELCOME, Division Twelve; Commanding Officer, USCGC POINT WHITE, Division Thirteen; and as Chief Staff Officer, Division Thirteen during these periods, Lieutenant Hickey participated in the development of standard Squadron operating procedures and developed and implemented tactics and doctrine for Coastal Surveillance operations. Additionally, he conducted an aggressive patrol and boarding program off hostile sections of the coast and in the Rung Sat Special Zone, and engaged in direct combat operations with the Viet Cong. While in command of USCGC POINT WHITE, he engaged a heavily manned and armed Viet Cong junk and destroyed it, accounting for eight enemy dead, and the capture of four. Through his outstanding performance of duty, Lieutenant Hickey contributed greatly to the counterinsurgency effort of the United States and Vietnamese forces at a time of increasing war tempo and rapid expansion of coastal surveillance operations. His courage, professional skill, and devotion to duty were in keeping with the highest traditions of the United States Naval Service.

The Combat Distinguishing Device is authorized.

Paul H. Hitz  
Secretary of the Navy

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